1972-04-24

The Barometer / v.9-4

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

The BAROMETER

VOL. IX, No. 4 | WEEK OF 24 APRIL 1972 | EDITOR: LCDR THOMAS J. LOFTUS SMC #2034

The BAROMETER is a student newspaper for the exchange of ideas and information concerning the development and improvement of the professional environment at NPS and within the U. S. Navy.

OFFICERS, FACULTY, STAFF and WIVES are invited to contribute articles of interest to the BAROMETER c/o The Editor.

EXCELLENCE IN BUREAUCRACY

Ronald G. Shafer, "No Bureaucrat Wants Award of 'The Bird' Not Even Its Winners" NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON - Facing a big policy decision? Consider the principles of "creative bureaucracy":

"When in charge, ponder. When in trouble, delegate. When in doubt, mumble." Then refer the whole problem to a coordinating committee for review.

That's the advice of no less an expert than James Boren, founder and chief finger-tapper of the National Association of Professional Bureaucrats. NATAPROBU (every self-respecting Washington group must have an acronym) is devoted to paper shufflers everywhere "who, by their steadfast dedication to the principles of dynamic inactivism, have kept things from happening, and thereby prevented mistakes from being made." Its emblem: a scrawny bird strangling in red tape, initialed-memos and gobbledygook.

Jim Boren, formerly a State Department official and now a Washington consultant, created NATAPROBU in 1968 as a vehicle for giving proper recognition to bureaucratic inaction. For a while all was well. But now NATAPROBU is perilously close to violating its own commitment to the status quo: Ominously, it is beginning to accomplish something.

Veteran ponderers here blame this largely on the "Order of the Bird." This is an award, a metal statue of an "unfeathered, potbellied bird," presented by NATAPROBU to those exhibiting excellence in bureaucratic excess. The first winner was a regional Internal Revenue Service official, for his detailed memorandum outlining lengthy requirements for employee sideburns. Another recipient was a State Department analyst who wrote a foreign-policy paper on "the qualitative quantitive interface."

The scheduled winner at NATAPROBU's 1969 awards banquet (delayed until December 1970 by red tape), was Vice President Spiro Agnew, for his alliterative achievements in communications. But Mr. Agnew declined the honor, responding in a telegram that "in all meiotic modesty" there were others "possessing prolusionary processes more deserving." ("Prolusionary" actually is Mr. Boren's word and apparently is his version of prolusory"; he admits to sometimes making up words as part of his philosophy of "adjustice responses".)

At any rate, therein lies the problem. No one wants to get the bird.

Last summer Mr. Boren was a star witness at hearings by a House Public Works sub-committee into ways to reduce government red tape. Mr. Boren, however, staunchly defended the growing blizzard of paper and carbon copies. Indeed, the 46-year-old Oklahoman testified with his usual deadpan eloquence:

"To deny a dedicated finger-tapper an adequate supply of paper on which to record the results of his prodigious pondering is to deny him the tools of creative nonresponsiveness."...

Mr. Boren's testimony may have included other insights. No one is sure, because he mumbled much of the time. Still, subcommittee members were obviously impressed. "I think it is one of the finest (statements) I have ever heard," responded Rep. John C. Kluczynski (D., Ill.), "but I don't know what in the hell he is talking about. I have been 41 years in the legislature and business, and I have never heard anything like this in all my life."

Actually the Congressman's response was partly tongue-in-cheek. But only partly. "Boren's testimony was a welcome relief from the usual seriousness of congressional hearings, but he got his point across in a very effective way," says a subcommittee staffer.

EDITOR"S NOTE: The preceding article was originally scheduled to be reprinted in January, but was delayed because of Bureaucratic Red Tape.

The Decline and Fall of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Lt. Col. William A. Hamilton, III, U. S. Army, Naval War College Review, April, 1972) Conclusion.

Having dwelt upon Presidents Kennedy and Johnson up to this point in our discussion of civil-military relations in the Government, we now turn to the role played by Robert S. McNamara who, as the eighth Secretary of Defense, served longer in this capacity than any other man in history. During his tenure the military power of the United States rose to its highest point since World War II while the influence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff sank to an all-time low.

Mr. McNamara, prior to his brief stint in the military during World War II, spent most of his adult life in school either as a teacher or a student. After World War II he went to the Ford Motor Company and in 14 years worked his way up to the presidency.

Although McNamara's energy, dedication, and methods were impressive enough to result in his selection as the first non-Ford-Family president in the history of the company, his reliance on numbers and measures sometimes led him astray.

> ...Many Ford men became dubious of the whole statistical analysis approach when the company halted production of an Edsel automobile. "It was killed," insisted one executive, "not because of its repulsive front grill or because we were slow building a strong sales team but because McNamara's charts showed there was no more market for a medium-priced car - something General Motors promptly disproved. "Those charts," the executive dryly noted, "give you funny answers sometimes."

While Mr. McNamara was working his way to the top of the Ford Motor Company, a number of changes were being made in the Pentagon which would someday allow Mr. McNamara to dominate the JCS just as he had his staff at the Ford Motor Company.

Paradoxically, the high-water mark of JCS influence occurred during World War II when the JCS did not officially exist. President Roosevelt reposed such trust and confidence in the Chiefs that "...he refused to issue a formal definition of JCS duties and functions, arguing that a written charter might hamper the Joint Chiefs of Staff in extending their activities as necessary to meet the requirements of the war."

Beginning with the National Security Act of 1947, the role of the JCS began to be prescribed and circumscribed. As the threat posed by the expansionist policies of the Soviet Union grew, there were serious and honest disagreements among the armed services over the best method of containing the threat. This controversy was naturally reflected in the JCS as the Chiefs attempted to define the best military strategy. Fairly or unfairly, these deep concerns earned a bad image for the JCS, and it was said around Washington that "...The Congress debates, the Supreme Court deliberates but the Joint Chiefs bicker." In an effort to minimize the effect of this bickering on defense policy, the Congress and the Executive took a number of actions which greatly increased the authority and control of the Secretary of Defense over the service components.

In 1953 the JCS were taken out of the chain of command so that it ran from the President to the Secretary of Defense through the civilian service secretaries to the commanders in the field. In 1958 the service secretaries were taken out of the chain of command, and the JCS were given operational responsibility for the unified and specified commands but were specifically forbidden any executive authority. The scope of the Chairman's duties was increased, giving him more influence over his fellow members, but at the same time a formal restraint was placed on easy communication between the JCS and the Congress. Free communication with the President was, of course, inhibited by the chain of command.

By 1960 the stage was set for Robert McNamara. Seizing the initiative and armed with the requisite legal authority and the unqualified backing of President Kennedy, Secretary McNamara began to bring all activities in the Defense Department under his own control. Central to this effort was Mr. McNamara's conviction that, "... the direction of the Department of Defense demands not only a strong, responsible civilian control, but a Secretary's role that consists of active, imaginative and decisive leadership of the establishment at large, and not the passive practice of simply refereeing the disputes of traditional and partisan factions."

The first step was to change the rules by which decisions about military strategy and procurement were made. To do this McNamara brought into his office a staff of systems analysts. McNamara and his staff felt that the generals and admirals relied too much on their judgment and experience as a basis for decisions. The generals and admirals felt that some things just could not be quantified and had to be decided on the basis of judgment and experience. Over the McNamara years the battle centered on just where this fine line lay.

The outcome of this struggle was vital to the future roles the generals and admirals were to play. For the systems analysts the contest was not as crucial. Systems analysis had proven itself to be a useful management tool, and its future was assured. The future was not so certain for senior military officers because if almost everything could be quantified and rationalized mathematically, then generals and admirals were simply anachronisms in every regard except for holding command in the field. If intuitive judgment and professional experience were to be relegated to a minor role in the decisionmaking process, then general and flag officers are not needed anymore at the highest levels of the Defense Establishment because it is primarily for their judgment and experience that they hold positions in the defense staff.

Traumatic as the McNamara experience was, it was certainly not without benefit to the military. "...Probably McNamara's most significant contribution to military strength," said one veteran, was that "he forced the Services to get at the heart of their own basic logic on why they want things."

It took the military services a while to adapt to the new rules in the Pentagon, and a number of new faces were brought in to cope with McNamara's "whiz kids." It was not long before each military service formed its own staff of systems analysts who were just as knowledgeable and bright as the ones from the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). The benefit of subjecting service originated plans and proposals to systems analysis had become obvious. At the same time the services learned that by using certain assumptions one could make the answer come out most any way that was desired. The manipulation of these assumptions became, in fact, the basis for the fundamental disagreement between OSD and the services. Reports of this practice on the part of OSD began to circulate, and McNamara's honeymoon with the ever-watchful Congress began to end. Nowhere was this and the struggle for existence by the generals and admirals more clearly demonstrated than in the controversy over the TFX.

Both the Navy and the Air Force were badly in need of a new attack aircraft, a new air-superiority aircraft, a new interceptor, and new reconnaissance aircraft. It seemed logical to McNamara that one airplane could be built to do all or most of these missions and that one airplane could be made suitable for use by both services. However, there were three obstacles to prevent the accomplishment of this worthy goal. First, the Navy and the Air Force operated from entirely different environments. The Navy airplane would have to be launched by catapult from the deck of an aircraft carrier and recovered by slamming into the carrier's deck and catching its tailhook on a wire. The Air Force aircraft would have to operate from the ground and be subjected to dust and debris not found at sea. Secondly, the state of the art was not such to permit the combination of all

the desired capabilities into one airframe that anyone could maintain. Third, and perhaps most serious, no Secretary of Defense had ever before told the services that they must combine everything into one airplane, told them how it was to be used, told them that they must all use the same aircraft, and told them just which aircraft manufacturer was going to produce it.

Before it was all over, the TFX issue became complicated by charges of intellectual corruption on the part of the analysts in OSD as well as under political manipulation of the procedure whereby the contract was awarded to General Dynamics over Boeing. In the final analysis, however, the military view was vindicated when it turned out that the TFX could not do what OSD and General Dynamics said that it would do and when it cost more than twice what OSD said that it would. The Navy found that the TFX (or F-111 as it came to be called) was too heavy to land on carrier decks. The Air Force Tactical Air Command found that the F-111's performance was no match for what was known about Russian fighters already in mass production. Ironically, it was the Air Force Strategic Air Command that was made to take the F-111 as the FB-111 and put it in the inventory for a role not originally envisioned by McNamara - as a low-level nuclear bomber.

If the TFX issue was microcosm of the struggle for supremacy in the Pentagon, then its failure was an example of the consequences of ignoring the advice of the professional military. There was little solace in the TFX episode for anyone, and if it was a victory for the JCS it was clearly Pyrrhic.

McNamara and the JCS would continue to struggle, but in almost every case the Secretary would be the winner as long as he enjoyed the strong backing of the President. "Never before had a Defense Secretary enjoyed such rapport with and unqualified backing from the White House. 'I couldn't accomplish anything over here without Presidential support,' he had once said. 'It is absolutely fundamental. I wouldn't and couldn't stay here one minute without it."

When White House aides pointed the finger at the JCS after the Bay of Pigs, McNamara waited a week before he bothered to issue a halfhearted rebuttal. When General Lemnitzer pointed out that OSD had not given the JCS time to consider McNamara's directive on how developments in space would be pursued, he was ignored. When McNamara and Admiral Anderson clashed, Anderson was sent to Portugal.

Despite difficulties, disagreements, and almost open warfare between the OSD staff and the JCS and service staffs, Mr. McNamara continued to meet with the JCS at almost every Monday afternoon meeting. As time went on the discussions became less and the silences grew longer until, toward the end of McNamara's reign, Mr. McNamara and the Chiefs just sat around the table and looked at each other across a silent chasm that had grown too wide for any of them to bridge.

Mr. McNamara was and is a sincere and dedicated patriot. Much of what he did for the Defense Establishment was beneficial, but the reality is that his abrupt managerial methods, his lack of understanding the values prized so highly by his military subordinates, and his chilling personality prevented him from accomplishing all that he could have, and thus many of his changes failed to outlive his own tenure.

The lack of "understanding between the civil representatives of the State and the leaders of the Armed Forces" was manifestly evident from 1961 to 1968. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, though different in many ways, shared a certain distrust of the views offered by the JCS. The McNamara secretaryship challenged the military on their home ground and placed them on the defensive.

Unfortunately this serious internal conflict took place at a time when decisions were made that pitted the might and prestige of the United States in a new and, in many ways, frustrating environment. While the intentions of the men involved were clearly the best, the result of the adversorial relationship which developed between the civilian and military leaderships of this country (particularly when viewed in light of the Vietnam experience) has had a most grievous effect on national security.

If genuine civil control over the military is the ideal, as most observers suggest, then the President and the Congress not only are obliged to define the role of the military, but also to protect the role of the military. The military can defend the Nation, but it may not be able to defend itself.

The military will most likely play whatever role is allotted to it by civil authority regardless of how it sees its own role; however, when invited to enter the political arena, it becomes difficult for senior military officers to resist the siren call to become "soldier-statesmen."

There is little in the background of the average American President to prepare him for the awesome task of becoming the Nation's grand strategist. The wise President seeks the counsel of his military leaders. He is not compelled to accept their advice, but it would seem that wisdom would dictate that he at least listen, and, further, wisdom would dictate that he insist that the military observe the precepts of their profession and offer "purely" military advice.

The civil-military environment in which the JCS operated during the Kennedy-Johnson era was marked by degrees of prejudice, pride, arrogance, and dilettantism. The attitudes and actions of both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson were affected by their prejudices regarding the military. The frictions that grew between Secretary McNamara and the Joint Chiefs found their roots in the seedbed of McNamara's enormous pride and intellectual arrogance. Dilettantism was practiced by all three men.

In the end it is the President and the Congress who should determine the role of force in each situation, but the military can best define the capability of that force to achieve the given policy objectives. If it is the duty of the civil authorities not to misapply military power, then it is the duty of the military not to overstate the capabilities of its forces and to make it abundantly clear in a given situation just what the forces can and cannot be expected to accomplish.

Unfortunately, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations saw neither the need for, nor the virtue of independent, professional military advice on policy matters which were fundamentally military in nature.

There are exceptions to all rules, and there are times when it is better to operate outside the proven and traditional parameters; however, improvisation over the long term will eventually exact its price and the price in the 1960's might well be called - Vietnam.